

PART I - ELIGIBILITY CERTIFICATION

The signatures on the first page of this application certify that each of the statements below concerning the school's eligibility and compliance with U.S. Department of Education, Office for Civil Rights (OCR) requirements is true and correct.

1. The school has some configuration that includes one or more of grades K-12. (Schools on the same campus with one principal, even K-12 schools, must apply as an entire school.)
2. The school has made adequate yearly progress each year for the past two years and has not been identified by the state as "persistently dangerous" within the last two years.
3. To meet final eligibility, the school must meet the state's Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) requirement in the 2009-2010 school year. AYP must be certified by the state and all appeals resolved at least two weeks before the awards ceremony for the school to receive the award.
4. If the school includes grades 7 or higher, the school must have foreign language as a part of its curriculum and a significant number of students in grades 7 and higher must take the course.
5. The school has been in existence for five full years, that is, from at least September 2004.
6. The nominated school has not received the Blue Ribbon Schools award in the past five years, 2005, 2006, 2007, 2008 or 2009.
7. The nominated school or district is not refusing OCR access to information necessary to investigate a civil rights complaint or to conduct a district-wide compliance review.
8. OCR has not issued a violation letter of findings to the school district concluding that the nominated school or the district as a whole has violated one or more of the civil rights statutes. A violation letter of findings will not be considered outstanding if OCR has accepted a corrective action plan from the district to remedy the violation.
9. The U.S. Department of Justice does not have a pending suit alleging that the nominated school or the school district as a whole has violated one or more of the civil rights statutes or the Constitution's equal protection clause.
10. There are no findings of violations of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act in a U.S. Department of Education monitoring report that apply to the school or school district in question; or if there are such findings, the state or district has corrected, or agreed to correct, the findings.

PART II - DEMOGRAPHIC DATA

All data are the most recent year available.

DISTRICT (Questions 1-2 not applicable to private schools)

1. Number of schools in the district: (per district designation)

43	Elementary schools (includes K-8)
0	Middle/Junior high schools
18	High schools
0	K-12 schools
61	TOTAL

2. District Per Pupil Expenditure: 12300

SCHOOL (To be completed by all schools)

3. Category that best describes the area where the school is located:

- ☒ Urban or large central city
☐ Suburban school with characteristics typical of an urban area
☐ Suburban
☐ Small city or town in a rural area
☐ Rural

4. 9 Number of years the principal has been in her/his position at this school.

5. Number of students as of October 1 enrolled at each grade level or its equivalent in applying school only:

Grade	# of Males	# of Females	Grade Total	Grade	# of Males	# of Females	Grade Total
PreK			0	6			0
K			0	7			0
1			0	8			0
2			0	9	126	91	217
3			0	10	44	37	81
4			0	11	57	44	101
5			0	12	37	49	86
TOTAL STUDENTS IN THE APPLYING SCHOOL							485

9. Students eligible for free/reduced-priced meals: 68 %

Total number students who qualify: 332

If this method does not produce an accurate estimate of the percentage of students from low-income families, or the school does not participate in the free and reduced-price school meals program, specify a more accurate estimate, tell why the school chose it, and explain how it arrived at this estimate.

10. Students receiving special education services: 26 %

Total Number of Students Served: 126

Indicate below the number of students with disabilities according to conditions designated in the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act. Do not add additional categories.

<u>3</u> Autism	<u>0</u> Orthopedic Impairment
<u>0</u> Deafness	<u>10</u> Other Health Impaired
<u>0</u> Deaf-Blindness	<u>39</u> Specific Learning Disability
<u>20</u> Emotional Disturbance	<u>5</u> Speech or Language Impairment
<u>0</u> Hearing Impairment	<u>0</u> Traumatic Brain Injury
<u>0</u> Mental Retardation	<u>0</u> Visual Impairment Including Blindness
<u>4</u> Multiple Disabilities	<u>45</u> Developmentally Delayed

11. Indicate number of full-time and part-time staff members in each of the categories below:

	Number of Staff	
	<u>Full-Time</u>	<u>Part-Time</u>
Administrator(s)	<u>2</u>	<u>0</u>
Classroom teachers	<u>28</u>	<u>0</u>
Special resource teachers/specialists	<u>2</u>	<u>0</u>
Paraprofessionals	<u>8</u>	<u>0</u>
Support staff	<u>2</u>	<u>0</u>
Total number	<u>42</u>	<u>0</u>

12. Average school student-classroom teacher ratio, that is, the number of students in the school divided by the Full Time Equivalent of classroom teachers, e.g., 22:1 17 :1

13. Show the attendance patterns of teachers and students as a percentage. Only middle and high schools need to supply dropout rates. Briefly explain in the Notes section any attendance rates under 95%, teacher turnover rates over 12%, or student dropout rates over 5%.

	2008-2009	2007-2008	2006-2007	2005-2006	2004-2005
Daily student attendance	97%	96%	96%	95%	92%
Daily teacher attendance	95%	94%	93%	94%	94%
Teacher turnover rate	0%	2%	0%	2%	3%
Student dropout rate	1%	1%	1%	1%	3%

Please provide all explanations below.

The attendance rate in 2004-2005 was below 95%; however, this attendance rate was considerably higher than in the past. The restructuring efforts were starting to have an effect in 2004. You will notice that the attendance rate is above 95% for all subsequent years.

14. For schools ending in grade 12 (high schools).

Show what the students who graduated in Spring 2009 are doing as of the Fall 2009.

Graduating class size	135	
Enrolled in a 4-year college or university	33	%
Enrolled in a community college	17	%
Enrolled in vocational training	10	%
Found employment	20	%
Military service	3	%
Other (travel, staying home, etc.)	0	%
Unknown	17	%
Total	100	%

PART III - SUMMARY

Robert A. Taft Information Technology High School has a rich tradition, educating several generations of families in Cincinnati, Ohio. Located in the West End of Cincinnati, Taft opened in 1954 as a neighborhood comprehensive high school. After several decades of academic success, the school eventually slid into academic disarray. In 2000, the decision was made to restructure Taft High School into Taft Information Technology High School.

Robert A. Taft Information Technology High School's mission is to graduate young people who are prepared to meet the challenges of the future through higher education and the world of work. In 2000 when the graduation rate was well below 30%, the school was in desperate need of educational reform. Test scores were very low with attendance rates hovering in the 60% range. After restructuring and several years of “academic emergency” ratings according to the State of Ohio School Report Card, the school finally moved up in the rating system to “continuous improvement” and then to “effective” (the next to highest rating in the accountability system).

Partnering with a local communications provider, Cincinnati Bell Inc., proved to be an integral part of the success at Taft Technology. The beginning of the partnership saw Cincinnati Bell providing fiber optic wiring as well as other infrastructure upgrades to the existing building. Later, a tutoring program, which specifically addressed state-mandated testing, was added. Additionally, incentive programs as well as scholarships for graduating seniors were implemented. All of the different programs with Cincinnati Bell proved to be key indicators to the success that students were exhibiting.

The staff at Taft Technology shares the belief that “failure is not an option”. This has led to the creation of an extensive safety net program, where students work before and after school as well as in the summer to address deficiencies. To avoid the stigma attached to obtaining extra help, these programs are called Bell 0 (before school), Bell 8 (after school), and 5th Quarter (summer). The safety net program has been an integral part of the turnaround at Taft Technology.

Because of the dramatic increase in test scores and graduation rates combined with the low socioeconomic rate of the student body, Taft Technology has been named a School of Promise by the Ohio Department of Education for the last two years. Further, the school was selected by Governor Ted Strickland as one of the only schools in the Cincinnati area to visit to study school reform. We continue to work diligently to move towards our ultimate goal of being rated “excellent” on the Ohio Department of Education School Report Card.

PART IV - INDICATORS OF ACADEMIC SUCCESS

1. **Assessment Results:**

Significant gains have been shown in assessment results over the last several years. Graduation rates and OGT scores have shown steady gains since 2004. Our assessment results show the dramatic gains that have occurred over the last several years. This has enabled the school to move from “academic emergency” to “effective” over the last several years.

Information on the Ohio Department of Education Accountability System can be found at the following link:

<http://ode.state.oh.us/GD/Templates/Pages/ODE/ODEPrimary.aspx?page=2&TopicRelationID=115>

This system works on the basis of state indicators, which for high schools consists of 12 indicators according to the following breakdown:

5 indicators at 10th grade (Reading, Writing, Math, Science, Social Studies)—75% Proficient

5 Indicators at 11th grade (Reading, Writing, Math, Science, Social Studies)—85% Proficient

Graduation Rate—90%

Attendance Rate—93%

Schools are also rated according to a performance index. This measure rewards the achievement of every student, not just those who score proficient or higher. Districts, buildings and community schools earn points based on how well each student does on all tested subjects in grades 3-8 and the 10th-grade Ohio Graduation Tests.

All tests have five performance levels – advanced, accelerated, proficient, basic and limited. The percentage of students scoring at each performance level is calculated and then multiplied by the point value assigned to that performance level.

Schools are given a rating of academic emergency, academic watch, continuous improvement, effective and excellent using either state indicators or the performance index. Taft Technology has received an effective rating for the last several years after being rated academic emergency for several years.

When reviewing assessment results, one will notice that starting in 2005-2006 data showed dramatic increases. This was due to the culmination of several years of professional development that supported schoolwide reform. Once success was achieved, this provided the needed push to move everyone to the next level in connection with achievement.

One will also notice that the achievement level for African American students at Taft Technology is extremely high and goes against the national trend where other subgroups are outperforming African American students.

2. **Using Assessment Results:**

The Instructional Leadership Team (ILT) meets regularly to discuss student and school improvement issues. The One Plan (school improvement plan) is the basis for which these discussions are held. Scores from the previous year are used to guide instruction for the coming year. Strategies that relate directly to instruction are reviewed and refined as necessary.

Additionally, assessment results are used in conjunction with tutoring programs. One such program, the Cincinnati Bell Tutoring Program, uses strand results by individual students to determine what kind of tutoring a student receives. All assessment results, including those from 7th and 8th grade, are used in this determination.

3. Communicating Assessment Results:

Assessment results are celebrated and are made freely available to all Taft Technology stakeholders in a timely manner. All students and parents receive detailed assessment scores. The school Web site (<http://taftiiths.cps-k12.org/GeneralInformation.html>) contains a link to the Ohio Department of Education School Report Card.

In preparing for the upcoming school year, all assessment results are published and distributed to the planning team. These are studied, discussed and used to set goals for the upcoming year. All stakeholder groups are invited to send representatives to these planning team meetings.

4. Sharing Success:

Robert A. Taft Information Technology High School has been very open to sharing our successes. This has been done by having an open door policy in relationship to visits from other schools, community organizations, concerned citizens, corporations and others. This is always done with no compensatory expectation. The staff at Taft Technology holds the belief that those in education should learn from one another by sharing successes so that programs that make a difference can be replicated.

To help facilitate tours that occur throughout our campus, students have been trained as Taft Ambassadors. These Taft Ambassadors are 11th and 12th graders who take our guests on a campus tour and give relevant information about our school. We believe that our students need to share in our success story since they are the ones who helped to create this transformation.

Over the years, Taft Technology has been a part of many different networks where we have been able to share the progress that has been made. We would welcome the opportunity to do this as a Blue Ribbon School and would gladly open our doors to anyone and everyone who is interested in our story.

PART V - CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION

1. Curriculum:

All students at Robert A. Taft Information Technology High School are required to take the following courses with number of credits required in parentheses:

English (4)
Math (3)
Science (3)
Social Studies (3)
Fine Arts (4)
Technology (5)
Physical Fitness (0.5)
Health (0.5)

Shown below is a brief synopsis of each core curriculum area and how these curriculum areas engage students in the learning process:

English

Students are required to take English 9, 10, 11, and 12 in order to graduate. English teachers focus on preparing students for post-secondary education in connection with reading and writing skills. Students are expected to complete a rigorous research paper relating to Capstone before graduation.

Math

Students are required to take Algebra 1, Geometry, and Algebra 2. Additionally, many students take Pre-Calculus and Calculus before graduation. Further, students who need further enrichment beyond Calculus are enrolled in upper-level math courses for independent study.

Science

All students are required to take Physical Science, Biology and Chemistry. Science teachers have had extensive training in ways to connect science teaching and learning to real-world experiences by bringing science alive.

Social Studies

All students are required to take Modern History, US History, Economics and American Government. Teachers have been trained to teach in such a way that the concepts covered are “brought to life” by way of connections to current events while tracking historical data.

Fine Arts/Electives

Although Information Technology courses can substitute for Fine Arts courses according to Ohio Department of Education guidelines, Taft Technology still requires students to complete Fine Arts courses. The staff believes that students need a well-rounded high school experience including courses such as Art, Advanced Art, Music, Band, and Seminar.

Technology

Please see item number 3.

Physical Fitness

Students are required to take two semesters of Physical Fitness. Physical Fitness instructors follow state and district standards in creating a program that meets the varying needs of all students. One component of the program is the Presidential Physical Fitness Challenge, which involves a three-tiered program geared towards getting students physically active by using standards that are set to moderate, above average and excellent. This includes pull ups, push ups, bench press, shuttle run, 3-minute step test and the 1 ½ mile run/walk.

Health

All students are required to complete a semester of Health. Health instructors not only follow the districtwide standards but use outside organizations to help accomplish this task. Through a partnership with the Greater Cincinnati YWCA, students are involved in a multi-week program dealing with varying topics, including violence prevention and healthy living trends.

2b. (Secondary Schools) English:

(This question is for secondary schools only)

The English language curriculum consists of the following strands:

Acquisition of Vocabulary

Reading Process: Concepts of Print, Comprehension Strategies and Self-Monitoring Strategies

Reading Applications: Informational, Technical and Persuasive Text

Reading Applications: Literary Text

Writing Processes

Writing Applications

Writing Conventions

Research

Communication: Oral and Visual

As part of the English language curriculum, students participate in the America's Choice 25-Book Campaign, where they are required to read at least 25 books each year. By doing so, students read approximately 1,000,000 words. Studies have shown that reading 1,000,000 words helps students gain 3,000 new vocabulary words. By participating in the 25-Book Campaign, students have performed better on the Ohio Graduation Test as well as in English classes.

Teachers work with students in the above strands employing differing strategies (particularly differentiated instruction strategies) to meet the needs of all learners. Those students who fall below grade level are enrolled

in a safety net program to receive additional assistance. This program provides help before and after school as well as during the summer. Students who are experiencing difficulty with writing skills are enrolled in special writing seminars to address deficiencies.

3. Additional Curriculum Area:

Since Robert A. Taft Information Technology High School offers a comprehensive information technology curriculum, all students are required to enroll in a technology course. During each student's Prep Academy (9th and 10th grade) program, he/she will enroll in Information Technology Foundations 1 and 2. These courses provide broad exposure to 17 different information technology strands.

At the end of the 10th grade year, a student makes an informed choice as to which specialty area (Interactive Media, Networking, Information Services and Support) he/she will enroll in for the final two years of high school (Senior Institute). Students in the Senior Institute spend at least 1/3 of the instructional day in this specialty area. Shown below is a brief synopsis of each area:

Interactive Media

Students enrolled in the Interactive Media Senior Institute become competent in the areas of creating, designing, and producing interactive multi-media products and services. Students learn how to use multi-media technology to develop products and programs that will be useful in many areas of life, such as business, entertainment, mass communications and advertising. Skill areas include Web design, computer-aided publishing, digital sound, digital video, digital photography, graphics and animation, and Power Point.

Networking

Students enrolled in the CISCO Networking Senior Institute become competent in areas dealing with the planning, implementation and analysis of network systems.

Students learn how to analyze networks system needs for design, installation, maintenance, and management. Skill areas include concepts such as operations, network administration, basic network design theory, computer hardware maintenance, and network management.

Information Services and Support

Students enrolled in the Information Services and Support Senior Institute learn a wide array of skill sets in connection with computer repair and support. Students are actively engaged in learning how to assemble and disassemble computers as well as to provide troubleshooting tips for people having computer problems.

4. Instructional Methods:

All staff members at Taft Technology have been trained in Differentiated Instruction. One Lead Teacher on staff is a member of the district wide Differentiated Instruction Expert Cadre. Using methods such as tiered lessons, curriculum compacting, tic-tac-toe, and individual lesson plans, teachers tailor lessons to meet the needs of all students. This proves to be particularly effective with students with disabilities as well as ESL students.

An example of how the curriculum is modified to meet the needs of diverse learners involves providing flash cards for students who may need supplemental learning in certain subject areas. Particularly in Biology, ESL students have been given the opportunity to help create flash cards to supplement teacher-directed

instruction. These flash cards help address the differing multiple intelligences that exist, particularly the visual learning that many ESL students depend on for successful learning.

5. Professional Development:

Professional development is an extremely valued component of the instructional program at Taft Technology. Since restructuring occurred several years ago, professional development has centered on differentiated instruction, writing across the curriculum, use of technology in instruction, four-column method, the seven steps to addressing common student needs, and several book talks.

Each of the professional development strategies listed above are tied directly to content standards. For example, the four-column method, which teaches students to break apart a multi-step problem in order to use the higher levels of Bloom's Taxonomy, was implemented schoolwide after training occurred. Each teacher uses this method in his/her own classroom using content standards. After this was implemented for a defined period of time, classroom teachers met together in departments to discuss and refine the process.

Another example of implementation involves the use of the seven steps to addressing common student needs. These steps include:

1. identify and clarify student needs
2. formulate an objective for each need and identify student work to be analyzed
3. identify and adopt an instructional focus to address each need
4. prepare to try the instructional focus in the classroom
5. deliver instruction; make consistent and genuine efforts
6. analyze student work to evaluate whether the instruction met student needs
7. reassess: repeat cycle or move on to another area of need

The seven steps are used by departments to help teachers meet the needs of all students. In department meetings, teachers choose an instructional focus and then follow the seven steps. This process is repeated several times with several different standards. The benefit of this method has been a refinement of what each student needs to do to be successful in each classroom subject area.

6. School Leadership:

The principal at Taft Technology works closely with the Instructional Leadership Team (ILT), which is made up of parents, teachers, and school partners. The ILT meets weekly and works the school administration to ensure that policies, programs, relationships and resources are focusing on moving student achievement to the highest level possible.

The ILT uses the One Plan (School Improvement Plan) as the basis for reviewing and monitoring school programs. At least monthly, each goal, which was based on a comprehensive needs assessment, is reviewed to see if any adjustments need to be made to the plan that was developed to meet that goal. Certain staff members are assigned to each goal to ensure that all facets of the plan associated with that goal are implemented appropriately and adjusted as needed.

PART VII - ASSESSMENT RESULTS

STATE CRITERION-REFERENCED TESTS

Subject: Mathematics

Grade: 10 Test: Ohio Graduation Test

Edition/Publication Year: 2008-2009

Publisher: Ohio Department of Education

	2008-2009	2007-2008	2006-2007	2005-2006	2004-2005
Testing Month	Mar	Mar	Mar	Mar	Mar
SCHOOL SCORES					
% Proficient plus % Advanced	98	96	90	87	40
% Advanced	3	4	5	5	0
Number of students tested	94	73	154	150	115
Percent of total students tested	99	98	97	100	100
Number of students alternatively assessed	0	2	4	2	0
Percent of students alternatively assessed	0	2	2	1	0
SUBGROUP SCORES					
1. Socio-Economic Disadvantaged/Free and Reduced-Price Meal Students					
% Proficient plus % Advanced	97	98	90	86	38
% Advanced	3	2	6	6	0
Number of students tested	73	45	106	100	77
2. African American Students					
% Proficient plus % Advanced	98	96	90	87	40
% Advanced	3	3	3	5	0
Number of students tested	94	69	152	144	112
3. Hispanic or Latino Students					
% Proficient plus % Advanced					
% Advanced					
Number of students tested					
4. Special Education Students					
% Proficient plus % Advanced					
% Advanced					
Number of students tested					
5. Limited English Proficient Students					
% Proficient plus % Advanced					
% Advanced					
Number of students tested					
6. Largest Other Subgroup					
% Proficient plus % Advanced					
% Advanced					
Number of students tested					

Notes:

There were no subgroups large enough to report other than free/reduced and African American.

Subject: Reading
Edition/Publication Year: 2008-2009

Grade: 10 Test: Ohio Graduation Test
Publisher: Ohio Department of Education

	2008-2009	2007-2008	2006-2007	2005-2006	2004-2005
Testing Month	Mar	Mar	Mar	Mar	Mar
SCHOOL SCORES					
% Proficient plus % Advanced	98	99	92	91	64
% Advanced	4	0	0	1	4
Number of students tested	94	73	154	150	115
Percent of total students tested	99	98	97	100	100
Number of students alternatively assessed	0	2	4	2	0
Percent of students alternatively assessed	0	2	2	1	0
SUBGROUP SCORES					
1. Socio-Economic Disadvantaged/Free and Reduced-Price Meal Students					
% Proficient plus % Advanced	97	98	88	92	60
% Advanced	3	0	0	2	1
Number of students tested	73	45	106	100	77
2. African American Students					
% Proficient plus % Advanced	98	99	91	92	64
% Advanced	4	0	0	1	4
Number of students tested	94	69	152	144	112
3. Hispanic or Latino Students					
% Proficient plus % Advanced					
% Advanced					
Number of students tested					
4. Special Education Students					
% Proficient plus % Advanced					
% Advanced					
Number of students tested					
5. Limited English Proficient Students					
% Proficient plus % Advanced					
% Advanced					
Number of students tested					
6. Largest Other Subgroup					
% Proficient plus % Advanced					
% Advanced					
Number of students tested					

Notes:

There were no subgroups large enough to report other than free/reduced and African-American.